



IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653

mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

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1. Trout Stocking Delayed Due to Poor Ice Conditions
2. Spring Brings Out Swans, Shed Antler Hunters – by Joe Wilkinson [electronic photo available upon request]
3. Iowa DNR/Farm Bureau Forestry Field Day
4. Common Buckthorn – How Common is it?
5. Plant Native Trees and Shrubs for Best Results
6. DNR to Host Public Meeting April 19 on Proposed Wildlife Rules

TROUT STOCKING DELAYED DUE TO POOR ICE CONDITIONS

DES MOINES – The final stocking of catchable sized trout in the south lake at Summerset State Park will be around noon on March 29. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources moved the stocking date to allow the deteriorating ice still covering the lake to go out.

Summerset State Park is the only trout fishery in central Iowa. The trout are raised at the Big Spring hatchery near Elkader. Anglers who want to fish for the trout are required to purchase a trout stamp (\$11) in addition to an Iowa fishing license. The daily bag limit for trout is five and the possession limit is 10.

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[photo available electronically upon request]

SPRING BRINGS OUT SWANS, SHED ANTLER HUNTERS

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

As the last of the ice recedes; and those dirty gray remnant snow piles disappear...the move will be on. Iowa's swans will be on the move.

Most are here now; held over the winter in protective quarters where open water and food were provided. Like chess pieces on the board, though, they will be moved into

position this spring. There, on carefully selected wetlands, paired adults will raise broods of cygnets. That part of the state's restoration program has been underway for several years. It's what lies in store for the young swans...in particular *this* year's broods...that takes things to the next level.

"We will release about 70 swans—last year's young—in scattered wetlands across the state," says Ron Andrews, coordinator of the swan program through the Department of Natural Resources. "Their wings were clipped last year to get them through the winter in captive locations. As they molt in their new flight feathers this year, they'll be able to go where ever they please."

As each of those birds lift off this summer, it adds another page to the swan restoration story. Trumpeters, the largest North American waterfowl, had not been documented in the wild since the 1880s. They had disappeared pretty much from the rest of the continental U.S., too. However, a local flock of several dozen turned up in a remote area of Colorado. Combined with Alaskan swans, several states began reintroducing the big birds about 25 years ago.

In 1995, the Iowa DNR stepped into the ring, purchasing swans from zoos, wildlife breeders and other state fish and game agencies, as funding allowed. Eventually, cygnets raised by those swans became the 'next generations' were reintroduced on to more wetlands. As they grew, they learned to fly on their adoptive lakes and ponds. Migration has spread them from Texas to Canada, though some return to their imprinted homes in Iowa. Still, most trumpeters remain in northern environs.

This year's production, though, will get a head start on a push into the south. "About half the young produced this year will be shipped to states to our south," notes Andrews. "Once they fly free down there, we hope to enhance a little more migration from the north. Hopefully they'll bring some additional swans from the 'north country' back down there, so those (southern) swan numbers will build."

Eventually, cooperating partners; county conservation departments and private citizens will be taking on more of the swan stewardship in Iowa. With wild swan numbers climbing, too, a healthy restoration is taking hold. That is important in a state that has lost 95 percent of its wetlands in the last couple centuries. "We are near sustainable levels. We had 29 wild nesting pairs last year in Iowa. Our numbers have steadily increased," says Andrews. "We're pleased with the way the program is going and with all the cooperative effort from our partners. It's just been fantastic."

And it brings the regal sight of these snow-white, nearly 30-pound waterfowl, with the melodic call of a French horn, a little closer for all of us to enjoy.

Antler 'Hunting' One More Excuse to Get Out

With the last of the snow drifts nearly gone, it is prime time for shed antler hunting. When those antlers are 'on the hoof,' it is the big racks that get all the attention

from hunters. As bucks drop their headgear, though, even the smallest fork-antler is prized by late winter and early spring outdoors purists with their eyes on the ground.

Though virtually every whitetail buck grows antlers, and loses them in the winter, only a tiny fraction are ever found. That's because mice, squirrels and other rodents devour them for the calcium and other minerals they provide. "It's just a lot of fun to try to find the needle in the haystack. There aren't a lot of them," explains veteran shed antler hunter A. J. Winter. He's not sure exactly how many he has found, more than 60, maybe 80. He is positive, though, about the other benefits. "It's a great way to spend time with your family outdoors. It's great exercise...and sometimes you actually find one."

Winter spends time after deer season patterning bucks; learning where they feed and bed. By late February and March, he hikes those same areas. "The thickest spot would be where they bed (then find) access to a cornfield, soybeans, alfalfa, acorns. Those would be the feeding areas," says Winter. From there, it's a matter of hit and miss. Creek beds, fences, anyplace where a loose-antlered buck might jump and jar it loose are better bets than open fields. Many hunters use the extra hours outdoors to get a good look at deer trails, scrapes and bedding areas for future hunts. Work quietly and you can locate a couple good turkey hunting spots.

"You can't lose by being outdoors this time of year," smiles Winter. "If you find one, that's an added bonus."

Meeting to Discuss Proposed Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area

A March 27, 7 p.m. session is set to discuss a proposed state Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area (ARCA) in southeast Iowa. The meeting, at the Louisa County Conservation Board headquarters, northeast of Wapello on County Rd G-56 is open to the public.

The proposed ARCA is a mixture of private and public lands encompassing the lower Cedar and Iowa Rivers and Mississippi River floodplain from Muscatine to Montrose. The creation of amphibian and reptile conservation areas is a new concept. "This is a unique area containing the highest number of amphibian and reptile species and the most number of rare species in the state," said Karen Kinkead, DNR wildlife diversity program biologist. "This area offers a variety of habitats to a host of declining species. From grassland species like ornate box turtle and six-lined racerunner, savanna species such as prairie kingsnake, to wetland species like central newt and cricket frog, the river corridors and surrounding uplands provide a perfect setting for this proposed area."

ARCA looks at amphibian and reptile conservation on a large landscape scale; depending on partnerships between public agencies, private conservation organizations, and landowners. "Landowners or farmers who would like to assist with amphibian and reptile conservation on their land will be offered technical guidance and financial assistance when it is available," Kinkead said. "Participation is voluntary, with no restrictions or requirements placed on the landowner."

For more information, contact Kinhead at 515-432-2823.

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IOWA DNR/FARM BUREAU FORESTRY FIELD DAY

The Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa State University Forestry Extension and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forestry Bureau will jointly sponsor a Forestry Field day on March 27, at the Lucas Community Center in Lucas. Field day registration will be from 9:30 to 10 a.m. at the community center.

“The field day is geared to farm and acreage owners who are looking for ways they can better manage their forest resources and why they would even want to better manage those resources,” said Paul Tauke, state forester with the DNR. “The regional and county Farm Bureau staff in south central Iowa have been fielding a number of questions recently from members who are interested in the income and management potential of their forests. That interest is what led to this field day.”

The morning session will be indoors and will discuss the role of the forestry bureau’s private landowner assistance program, carbon credit trading on forest plantations, and woodland “IRAs.” Lunch will be provided by Farm Bureau.

Following lunch, a tour of various woodland practices will be conducted on Stephens State Forest. The discussion in the forest will focus on timber marketing, forest management and forest stand improvement and how those practices can be implemented on the farm or acreage.

The group will return to the Lucas Community Center around 3 p.m. for questions and wrap up. Dress appropriately for outdoor weather. You do not need to be a Farm Bureau member to attend the field day.

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COMMON BUCKTHORN- HOW COMMON IS IT?

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) has unfortunately become common in Iowa. Buckthorn was introduced to the United States as an ornamental plant in the 1850s and has since invaded Iowa’s woodlands to the point where it is slowly taking over.

Common buckthorn is usually six to 12 feet tall but can reach heights of 20 feet. It can grow as a shrub or as a small tree. The leaves are oval shaped and usually stay

green and hang on the plant late into the fall or early winter. They are deeply veined with toothed leaf margins. The bark is dark gray to brown but has a very distinct cambial layer. When you cut into the inner bark, it has a yellow to orange color. The thorn on Common Buckthorn isn't much of a thorn at all. At the end of the twigs you may find a small thorn ¼ inch in length.

Buckthorn is a dioecious plant that produces a berry like drupe, which is a fancy way of saying it has both male and female plants and that the female plants produce a fruit/seed. The seed of this plant is approximately ¼ to 3/8-inch in diameter and is found in clusters. The seed is green when it first appears and as it matures throughout the summer it turns dark purple to black. It is a prolific seed producer and can spread rapidly. Much of the seed tends to fall directly below the plant, but can be moved by birds. Buckthorn seed has a laxative effect on the birds that eat it, which allows the seed to be distributed at an alarming rate. This isn't really much fun for the birds either.

Another problem is that Buckthorn is a very shade tolerant species. It is slowly invading the understory of Iowa's savannas and woodlands. This plant can come in so thick that it is almost impossible to walk through. This thick brushy layer stops the natural regeneration of native trees and shrubs, chokes out the natural herbaceous layer and destroys wildlife habitat and native food sources.

Buckthorn may also have some fairly significant agricultural implications. Common buckthorn is an alternate host for crown rust of oats and is the winter host for the soybean aphid. Both of these conditions can reduce yields and impact a farmer's bottom line.

There are a few options for controlling buckthorn. The first is fire. Controlled burns can be very effective at top killing buckthorn plants, but does not immediately kill the root system. If you use fire you will need to conduct multiple burns. This option will work best in fire dependent ecosystems like prairie, savanna and some woodland situations. If fire is used, make sure to have a burn plan, adequate equipment and manpower to conduct a safe and effective burn.

Another approach is the use of herbicides. There are many options when it comes to herbicide control. The first is the cut and treat method. This is where the plant is cut down and herbicide is applied to the freshly cut stump. This method is fairly effective but labor intensive. Some herbicides that can be used for cut stump treatment include products like Tordon RTU (picloram 5.4 percent and 2,4-D 20.9 percent), Garlon 3A (triclopyr 44.4 percent amine salt) or Roundup (glyphosate 41.0 percent). There are many other products with these active ingredients so you may want to look around.

Basal bark treatment is also an option when using herbicides. With this option, the herbicide can be applied directly to the stem of the plant. This application is less labor intensive but is not as effective on larger plants. Garlon 4 (triclopyr 61.6 percent ester) is a product that is commonly used with this method.

Any time you use herbicides you need to be aware that the “LABEL IS ALWAYS THE LAW.” If you receive recommendations contrary to the herbicide label, you must follow the label.

The last method is mechanical removal. Buckthorn tends to be fairly shallow rooted and small plants are easy to pull. This method works well for small areas but is not practical for large infestations.

With any of these methods you will need to continually work at it. Common buckthorn a very aggressive plant and one or two treatments will not keep it under control. Buckthorn can be controlled, but only with years of hard work and dedication.

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PLANT NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS FOR BEST RESULTS

AMES - As the days begin to warm, Iowans start thinking about planting trees and shrubs. But what species of trees and or shrubs should you plant? While exotic non native trees and shrubs species may have an exciting appeal, using native trees and shrub seedlings from an Iowa grown nursery is best for all concerned.

“Native trees and shrubs are better adapted to Iowa’s extremes in weather and to Iowa soils, providing superior native wildlife habitat,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau. “Native plants have adapted themselves over time with insect and disease issues, and they are less likely to be stressed than non-native plants during extreme weather events. Native trees are also a link to Iowa’s heritage.”

Prior to settlement, Iowa contained 6.7 million acres of forest with a mixture of oaks, hickories, maples and others.

“Today, with 2.7 million acres of forestland, Iowans can still take pride in growing some of the worlds finest hardwoods, like black walnut, oak, ash, cottonwood, sycamore and silver maple,” Walkowiak said. “Whether you are planting trees to grow forest products, to increase or improve wildlife habitat, stop erosion or to improve the overall landscape, native trees and shrubs offer the best chance for success. You should pick and choose species according to your land management objectives and your planting site.”

The State Forest Nursery, in Ames, produces hardy, native trees and shrubs at affordable costs. The State Nursery buys its native seeds from local Iowa seed collectors each year to ensure the planing stock will withstand Iowa’s land and weather conditions. By providing a reliable source of suitable planting stock in large quantities, the State

Forest Nursery produces four million bare root seedlings per year for sale to private landowners for reforestation, soil erosion control and wildlife habitat.

“Before ordering seedlings or gathering seed, take some time to decide what you want from your trees,” Walkowiak said. Good sources of additional information are district foresters, County Conservation Boards or county extension agents.

The State Forest Nursery has a good supply of native shrubs and small trees perfect for wildlife habitat projects – for the backyard, small acreage or large planting. Call 800-865-2477 or visit www.iowatreeplanting.com for more information.

For more information contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966 or john.walkowiak@dnr.state.ia.us

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DNR TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING APRIL 19 ON PROPOSED WILDLIFE RULES

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting a public meeting to discuss a number of new proposed regulations covering deer hunting, fall wild turkey hunting, and waterfowl seasons. The meeting will be conducted over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on April 19, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“This is an opportunity for our hunters and people who support wildlife to give us some feedback on these regulations,” said Dale Garner, chief of the DNR’s wildlife bureau. “We will go over the proposed regulations and seasons, and take comments from anyone willing to speak, then, if there is any time remaining, we will open the discussion to other topics.”

The proposed changes include reducing the number of counties able to participate in the January and November antlerless deer only seasons, eliminate the state forest zones for turkey hunting, and establish the fall 2007, spring 2008 hunting seasons and bag limits.

The DNR will have staff members from the wildlife bureau at each site to help with the meeting.

ICN Locations:

Ames	Iowa State University 1, Lagomarcino Hall, Corner of Knoll Road and Pamel Dr., Room N147 (515) 294-4111
Burlington	Great River Area Education Agency 16, 3601 West Avenue (319) 753-6561
Calmar	South Winneshiek High School, 203 W. South St., Room 17(563) 562-3269

Cedar Falls	Area Education Agency 267, 3712 Cedar Heights Dr. (319) 273-8200
Cedar Rapids	Kirkwood Community College 5, 6301 Kirkwood Blvd. SW, Washington Hall, Room 104 (319) 398-5452
Centerville	Centerville National Guard Armory, Dewey Road, RR1, Box 125B (641) 683-9826
Creston	Green Valley Area Education Agency 14, 1405 N. Lincoln, Turner Room (641) 782-8443
Davenport	North High School, 626 W. 53 rd St., Room 576 (563) 388-9880
Dubuque	Senior High School, 1800 Clarke Dr., Room A-123 (563) 552-5500
Fort Dodge	Fort Dodge High School, 819 N 25 th St., Room 12 (515) 955-1770
Iowa City	Iowa City National Guard Armory, 925 South Dubuque St. (319) 337-7675
Marshalltown	Iowa Valley Community College District 1, 3702 South Center St., Continuing Education Center, Room 806 (641) 752-4645
Mason City	North Iowa Area Community College 1, 500 College Dr., Activity Center, Room 106 (641) 423-1264
Ottumwa	Ottumwa National Guard Armory, 2858 N. Court Road (641) 683-9826
Red Oak	Red Oak National Guard Armory, RR 1 Park West Road, Old Hwy. 34 (712) 623-2344
Sioux City	Northwest Area Education Agency 12, 1520 Morningside Avenue, Room 206 (712) 274-6000
Spencer	Spencer National Guard Armory, 11 East 23 rd Street (712) 262-3904
West Des Moines	Dowling Catholic High School, 1400 Buffalo Road., Room 516 (515) 225-3000

For more information, contact Garner at 515-281-6156 or Willie Suchy at 515-281-8660.

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